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***Innovative sparkling wines through Apulian vine landraces: consumers' preferences in support of an emerging supply chain***

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**Abstract**

Objectives - Apulia region, in southern Italy, is recently focusing on the production of sparkling wine by adapting the winemaking processes (Classic and Charmat) to the characteristics of five important local varieties (black and white Bombino, Negroamaro, Primitivo and Uva di Troia), as well as of six promising regional varieties (Bianco d'Alessano, Francavidda, Marchione, Maresco, Minutolo and Ottavianello). In this regard, the paper investigates: i) the consumers' attitude for the new Apulian sparkling wines based on local vine landraces and ii) how the socioeconomic characteristics could influence their preferences for such products.

Findings have implications for debates concerning: i) the conservation of Mediterranean vine species, designing ad hoc and cost-effective on-farm programmes; ii) the development of an innovative diversification strategy concerning the Apulian vine landraces, based on the production of new sparkling wines; iii) the development of a new bubbly market, with positive repercussions on the regional territory.

Methodology - We carried out a Choice Experiment, a questionnaire-based stated preference approach that allowed the understanding of consumers' preferences and the settlement of new marketing strategies. The econometric analysis was carried out through a latent class model (LCM). This approach simultaneously allows sample segmentation and segment-specific estimation of the model parameters.

Results - The identified segments highlighted different consumers' preferences and sensitivity to the new sparkling wines in connection with socio-demographic and taste characteristics. In particular, the analysis pointed out four groups of buyers. The first one was characterized by older, cultured and high-income consumers that usually drank wine at restaurant and at home for special occasions. In buying wine, they considered numerous characteristics, i.e. taste, variety, packaging, brand, prizes, food pairing, territory of production, wine stories and

productive process. They appreciated the new regional products, able to preserve the regional landscape and to favour the sustainable agriculture. In order to prevent frauds, they were favourable to specific geographical brands and techniques based on the DNA traceability. For these products, they were willing to pay up to € 30. The second group was characterized by older, not-cultured and high-income consumers, which often drank wine, but only considering some characteristics, i.e. taste, brand and territory of production. About the new regional products, they were favourable to specific geographical brands and techniques based on the DNA traceability, but did not consider the landscape externalities and the sustainable agriculture by the regional vine landraces. For these products, they were willing to pay up to € 16. The third group was characterized by younger consumers that seldom drank wine, chosen only on the basis of the brand. They appreciated the new regional products moderately, and only for the sustainability of the production process. For these products, they were willing to pay up to € 11. Finally, the fourth group was characterized by consumers that usually bought commercial wine. They appreciated the new regional products moderately and, for these products, they were willing to pay up to € 5.

These findings are useful to producers and marketer of sparkling wine, for the settlement of proper production and marketing strategies.

**Keywords** : Sparkling wines, Vine landraces, Choice experiment, Apulia.

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